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In general, apart from the ghost helper and gambling power complexes, to be described later, no cult of ghosts existed, and no prayers or food or other offerings were made to them. Ghosts of those who had committed unjustified murder, as defined by the Gros Ventre code, did not go where the other souls went, but stayed where their bodies lay or wandered around and "bothered" the living. If a person suffered a stroke, a ghost, apparently of a murderer, was thought to have caused it and to have twisted the victim's face or mouth and pulled the eyelid down.

Ghosts "bothered" the living in less serious ways, appearing in the shadow and disappearing, whistling, playing tricks, in more recent times rapping on windows, and so forth. The two following stories, told by The Boy in light vein and laughingly, illustrate ghostly ways.

"A war party of brave Gros Ventres started out.[84] Toward evening they came to a timbered stream and made a lodge of willows near a good-sized tree, not knowing that a couple had been buried there. After a good meal, they were singing and enjoying themselves, when they heard someone hollering far off. The hollering kept coming closer and closer to their camp until it got very near. One of the men said: 'We had better start up a fire.' Before anyone got up to fetch wood, wood began being thrown into the tepee. This kept up until the tepee was so loaded up with wood that they were crowded out. They then started to carry the wood out of the tepee. One man remarked: 'I never heard of a ghost killing anybody.' Then they heard the ghost laughing a little distance off. One of the men shot toward the spot from which the laughing was coming, but the ghost laughed all the more. All the men then got back inside the tepee, and one of them said: 'I'll get some wood and we'll make some tea.' A good fire was started, and the old fellows prayed with the pipe. The ghost was meanwhile moving the embers away to keep the fire from burning. Before the snow was fetched to be melted, snow fell from the open center top of the tepee and put the fire out. At this they got scared and said: 'Let's move from here.'

[84] In 1948 The Boy remarked that this happened in Lame Bull's life time; and that the ghost referred to in the story is the kind known as tsë:k. [R.F.]

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sure will do that; they bother people and mock you when you talk or laugh." After that there was no ghost in that piece of brush. 775 [825]

On another occasion, Al was coming back on horseback with a group after a hand game. In a gap through which their route would take them, the others saw a yellow or blue light, like a lamp in the dark, moving this way and that. But Al could see nothing. The others went home by a roundabout way, but Al went alone through the gap, saw nothing, and met the others farther on.

Many, though not all, ghosts had the habit of whistling, and some talked in a whistling language.

Ghosts were apt to appear as owls or to hoot like owls, both in the shaking tent rite, to be described later, and on other occasions as illustrated in the following story which had been told The Boy by his father, Lame Bull.

"Lame Bull went on a war expedition. Seven Sioux were killed. Their bodies were left laying where the killing took place. A few years later Lame Bull and some comrades came near this place. As they reached it, seven owls flew from it. The owls did not fly away but just milled around the spot. They were the seven Sioux turned into owls." [825]

Children used to be told: "If you do not obey, the owls will catch you." If owls alighted on a lodge or house or hooted around very near on bush, tree or hill, this presaged the death of some one. Owls also gave warnings.[26] In these instances however we got no evidence that the owls were conceived of as ghosts. 825 775

Besides the ghosts there were other bad spirits, who "shot" people by projecting some small object into the body of a person and so causing illness.[27] This belief, we were told, was very widespread but we did not obtain many details regarding it. The following incident, narrated by Coming Daylight, may serve as illustration. 776 753

On one occasion when Coming Daylight was living where Fort Belknap now is and when her daughter was still a sack baby, the latter would not quit screaming. She would hold her head to one side and would not nurse, and they could not satisfy her with

[26] An example is given in Flannery, 1953, p. 93.
[27] Very probably connected with practice of witchcraft. [R.F.]

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anything. So Coming Daylight took her infant to her aunt who was a kind of "spiritualist" (one having a ghost helper). The aunt took the baby in her arms and told Coming Daylight: "You get me a piece of charcoal." The aunt took the charcoal and rubbed it on the baby's neck at the back, bent over as if she were going to bite the infant, drew out (apparently by sucking) a little sliver from the baby's neck, and said: "This is what caused her to have a stiff neck." They said a spirit had shot her, although they did not have the baby outside when this happened to her. You were not supposed to take an infant outside in the dark without covering its head. Actually Coming Daylight's infant was inside the tent during the night and they heard something hit a lodge pole and it seemed to frighten the baby, who continued to cry until the aunt removed the sliver.

Mental abnormality could also be caused by such bad spirits, ghostly or other, whether by "shooting" the victim or getting into him is not known. To keep the bad spirits at bay, a stick, with its tip blackened with "nicotine," was left near a baby whenever the baby had to be left alone. Whenever adults went out in the dark, they picked up and carried a stick, of any kind; it was believed that the spirits were afraid of the sticks and would not come near. Beyond such protective observances there appears to have been no cult proper of these bad spirits in the way of propitiatory prayers or offerings.

Much, though not all sickness was ascribed to a malevolent being called Atsa:. When illness recently took off a mother and child in a family, the people said, "Atsa: has visited so-and-so's family." Atsa: did not himself put sickness-causing objects in his victims' bodies, but he was responsible indirectly for other kinds of illness, that is, he had something to do with them. To him were attributed particularly epidemics, especially smallpox, chicken pox and measles. He was an ugly, hideous being, unkempt, with scaly skin and bushy hair who never washed his face. He was thin and starved-looking and his nails were long. He was thoroughly disliked. No food or pipe was ever offered to him. When serious sickness visited the camp, the Supreme Being was prayed to: "Take Atsa: away. He is causing a lot of trouble." Atsa: was

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793 784 blew medicine on the woman who then recovered. If you even passed in front of the keeper, you would "drop in a cramp."

Food offered in the keeper's lodge, even on a purely social and informal occasion, had to be eaten there and could not be taken out unless some one told a personal war-deed. This taboo applied even to an ex-keeper guest, although not to the actual keeper's [576] children. The keeper could break up the gathering by emptying his own pipe—a recognized Gros Ventre convention for hosts.

[821] If anybody threw water at the keeper or hit him with water, this would cause rain.

Where a group of men were seated in a row or crescent having a purely social smoke, the general procedure was as previously described. If the Pipe keeper were one of the group, the man passing the pipe to him on either the clockwise or return circuit would first make a gesture with it "to the rear between himself and the keeper," if you didn't do that the keeper would not accept it.

The powers of the Feathered Pipe keeper and co-keeper specifically recorded by us were similar, apart from control of storm, rain and flood and, as far as they went, to those of the Flat Pipe keeper and co-keeper. The weather control powers will be described later under Feathered Pipe ritual.

[753] Anyone who stepped in the track of the keeper or co-keeper got a fit, for the soles of their moccasins were kept treated with wild parsley.

The keeper and co-keeper acquired by reason of their office certain doctoring powers.

787 793 The keeper had marked dreaming and forecasting powers, just as the Flat Pipe keeper had, and his dreams when told to the people were "big news." In a dream he would, for instance, see animals fighting the Gros Ventres and this would be a warning to a war-raiding party to act discreetly. He would foretell from his dreams who would win in a prospective battle and how many would be killed. At the time the Flat Pipe was captured by the Assiniboine (see No. 8 in Appendix), the Feathered Pipe owner was fore-warned by the Pipe in a dream and he and his party escaped. If the keeper had a dream that foreboded evil fortune he would on waking talk to the Pipe and ask it not to let the evil

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was full of 'nicotine,' and showed me how to draw out sickness through the stem. But I told him: 'I don't care to have any power, because people who accept power have only a certain length of time to live and it is always too soon [short].'"

Those who possessed gambling power in particular always became afflicted with some serious ailment of their legs and/or arms. There would be pain in and swelling of the joints, and the possessors would die before their time. This happened to Lone Bear, The Boy's wife's father, who had gambling power; while still in his prime his legs went bad, and even though he quit gambling to escape the penalty, he died prematurely. Red Whip, too, one of the greatest of those with gambling power, who died in 1912, died, the Gros Ventres believed, before his time.

It was believed that Bull Lodge, a great medicine man, did not live his life out.

A person, however, who had acquired power and later transferred all of it by gift or sale to another person or persons could thereby escape the penalty and live his life out. In this case the penalty would be transferred, along with the power, to the transferee or transferees.

Doctoring power was sometimes avoided or refused for other reasons than fear of or unwillingness to accept the penalty of illness or shortened life. Doctors, somewhat like keepers of the sacred Pipes, had to live restricted lives, abstain from certain foods, and avoid certain actions. Personal liberty was thus curtailed. Coming Daylight, when a young girl, was offered medicine power by a man four successive times in dreams, but she refused: "I did not want to be a medicine woman. I did not like it because medicine people suck on the affected part of the patient and have to swallow what they extract,—even though that man was showing me that I would have to extract with my hands, and not by sucking." Bad Bad Bull had power to cure the powerful "stomach-eating sickness" [cancer?] and used to suck out the small animal that caused it. In his old age he wanted to give this power to his sister, but she would say: "Oh, I am bashful. I would not be able to doctor that sickness. I would like to have the power so I could cure the pains but I would not like the part [or the curing pro-

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CHAPTER VII

CURING PRACTICES

A good many Gros Ventres through quest or otherwise acquired doctoring power. To give a better idea of it we shall need to see it against the larger background of native concepts of the cause and cure of illness.

Causes of Illness

Some illnesses were ascribed to solely or mainly natural agents or agential causes, others to supernatural ones. The line between the two types of causation is not, however, always clear.

Sometimes supernaturally caused ailments followed automatically from the breach of taboos, others were inflicted intentionally by non-human or by human agents.

Marrow bones were not supposed to be broken inside a lodge or house, and a person who transgressed this taboo would suffer from sore legs. The penalty of fits, cramps and paralysis from certain actions to or by keepers of the Flat and Feathered Pipes has been previously noted.

The chief sender of sickness, particularly of epidemics such as smallpox and measles, was the being, Atsa:. This being appears likewise to have had something to do indirectly with other ailments, but exactly what part he had in causing such ailments could not be cleared up by us. The intrusion of pathogenic objects into the body to cause illness was not attributed to Atsa: personally.

Malevolent spirits,—whether ghostly or other is not clear,—would cause illness by "shooting" people, that is, by projecting some small object into the body of the victim. To the maleficent activity of these spirits was also ascribed mental derangement, at least in some cases. One such mentally deranged woman was once seen by Coming Daylight. This woman who was getting along in years became deranged all of a sudden. Coming Daylight, with the consent of the woman's husband, went to her lodge and peered in.

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"The woman had everything, like blankets and dishes and so forth, stuffed in between the poles and covering of the lodge. The woman herself was on the ground, crawling around and making motions with her hands as if she were working at something on the ground." Coming Daylight did not know if or how the woman recovered from her derangement because shortly after camp was moved and the people scattered.

Coming Daylight gave details of another mental case, that of a young man who wandered off from camp, tore off his clothing, cut his hair off short, and came running back fast to camp. The people noticed his wild look, grabbed him, and picketed him. He was "raving mad." Later he used to go into the brush, cut sticks until he had a large bundle, and carry the bundle around with him until his death. Some people were afraid of him, but most were not. Coming Daylight did not recall his ever scaring her or her children. He would ask in a kind of pitiful way for something to eat. He would visit a while and then just rush out of the lodge or house.

Thick gave us details of one case of illness of doubtful origin. The illness had started one night when Thick and an inseparable boyhood friend of his were coming back to camp together. They were walking on a flat together, and heard behind them a sound "like somebody dragging a robe or something stiff." They thought it was a ghost and started to run. After a bit they stopped and looked back but could not see anything. They decided it must be a ghost. So they started walking again, and pretty soon they heard the same sound. Of course they then ran. Thick's friend then had a feeling as if somebody were grabbing the hair up on his head, and looked back and said: "Stop! Here is the fellow who is chasing us."

It was a great big owl dragging its wings. From that time on he got worse, and died soon after in 1889. Thick thought that the scare got that night brought on the illness. The doctors who treated the boy claimed he had been "doped" [bewitched] by someone.

Grave or fatal illness could also be brought on by human beings, usually those with doctor power, through sheer wishing or through other procedures, or even, it seems, by human without supernaturally acquired power through concentrated wishing, as will be explained in detail later.

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753 So much for what we have called the agential causes of disease, the impersonal forces and personal agents, external to the victim, which were thought to be responsible for illness. In addition, some illnesses at least were believed to be due to specific proximate instrumental or physiological causes, internal to the victim.

One disease, apparently appendicitis, was thought, in recent days, to be caused by a "gut getting plugged by a seed or by food,"—a theory most probably taken over from the whites. One case of tuberculosis was ascribed to the permanent cessation of menses after the woman had borne her third child.

Various diseases were attributed to some small object, such as a sliver of wood or a finger nail, that had been projected with malicious intent into the victim's body by some human or preterhuman being or that had otherwise found entrance therein. In particular the disease called "cut away," wano:'wa, probably cancer, was caused by the presence in the victim of a kind of "bug" or "animal," roundish in shape, and with a big mouth. This "animal" would move around within a person and "eat his insides." Bad Bull, a medicine man who had power to cure "cut away," used to extract from his patient such an "animal" of green, yellow or black color. "The black ones were not so bad," according to Singer. According to The Boy, Bull Lodge whom he knew well, in his doctoring for "cut away" would take out such an animal from the belly of his patient. The animal on one occasion at least was about four inches long, seagreen on top and whitish on the belly (or green on one side and white on the other, according to Garter Snake) and without legs or eyes. About one half the animal was mouth, with no teeth, however, in the mouth. In one cure, Bull Lodge ripped open the animal after extracting it and showed the onlookers what was inside it. "It was full of blood, with some things floating around in this blood." Bull Lodge claimed that this animal, unless extracted, would "eat up the sick person's liver or some other part of his insides" and so kill him. He used to say that this animal caused all stomach troubles.

Garter Snake described one case of a woman suffering from rectal hemorrhage caused, as was revealed at the time of her cure "by a blue thing inside her that 'looked like a rock and was as big as a man's fist.' When put on the fire it broke open and

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was just a shell. It must have been some kind of animal with a thin shell."

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The concept of soul-loss as resulting from or accompanying sickness in certain cases was present. "It was held by the old people," The Boy said, "that a person's 'soul' was not inside his body or any organ thereof, but was near or around him. As a sick person got worse, his 'soul' kept getting farther and farther away. If it got too far away, he died. When a person was very sick, people would say: 'His soul is leaving (going away from) him farther and farther.'[1] In brief, soul wandering or "soul-loss" was a preliminary to death rather than a cause of disease. We obtained no evidence that the concept of soul-stealing entered at all into Gros Ventre pathology.

Treatment of Illness

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From the causes of disease we now pass to the treatment thereof. While some ailments and cases of illness were thought to be due to natural causes, and others to supernatural causes, the line of demarcation cannot always be sharply drawn. Likewise as regards the prevention and treatment, in some instances they were clearly looked upon by the Gros Ventres as of the purely natural or "rational" order, in others equally clearly of the supernatural order, in some few seemingly of both orders combined, in a few others of uncertain order. While the Gros Ventres quite explicitly distinguished in general theory and in certain specific cases between natural and supernatural prevention and treatment, in actual practice at times, and in many specific cases, they drew no sharp line between the two orders. In the following pages we shall take up first natural or "rational" prevention and treatment, secondly combined or doubtful types of treatment and lastly supernatural types. In general remedies and preventives fall into three more or less corresponding classes: "domestic" remedies known to and freely used by everybody; certain remedies more or less "rational," exclusively owned and used by particular non-profes-

[1] The soul was believed to "kind of leave" a person under stress of great fear. Cf. Flannery, 1953, 92.